

News Conference

April 2, 2020

Kevin Captain, Interim Community Information Director, County of Volusia

Good afternoon. Thank you for joining us today. We're all watching as this crisis continues to unfold, and not only are we all watching, we are all involved in this together.

Volusia County officials are working continuously around the clock trying to stay informed with the latest information and keep you informed.

County officials, area hospitals, our public health department, and many other agencies and I are working collaboratively together and taking actions to best protect you and your loved ones.

Today you will hear from Volusia County Chair Ed Kelley, County Manager George Recktenwald, Physicians from Halifax Health and Advent Health, as well as Sheriff Chitwood.

We are depending on each of you to take personal responsibility, just as you depend on us in making these unprecedented decisions.

With that, I'll introduce Volusia County Chair Ed Kelley.

Ed Kelley, Volusia County Chair

Thank you very much Kevin. I know everyone right now has more questions than we have answers. We are looking for those.

There is no exact road map we address and face in this crisis; navigating the situation and coordinating with all of our partners working together to make informed decisions.

Kind of ironic that Tuesday the County manager, George and I, and our County Attorney, are working on a basically "Safer at Home Ordinance" that we were planning to work and draft. Ironic enough that the Governor, as we know, yesterday, issued an Executive Order regarding essential services and activities basically safer at home.

Order includes a lot of details, the idea is what we've been saying all along- stay at home if you can. I'll let George speak to this in more detail, but our county is adhering strictly to the governor's orders. Continue to stress personal responsibility that means each of us doing our part. One of the things I do when I'm out and about, I assume that everyone I see has the virus. I also feel and think, I have it, and don't want to give it to anyone. I think it will keep you much safer and more aware of the situation if you do that.

With that, I'd like to bring up County Manager George Recktenwald.

George Recktenwald, County Manager, County of Volusia

Thank you Mr. Chair. Good afternoon. Thank you for joining us.

As we, all know this is a long event, and we expect it to continue and surge through the end of April and well into May. On March 13, we issued a state of local emergency, which allows us flexibility in handling the crisis. Recognizing the potential crowding on our beaches, we made the determination to close the beach to vehicles. This allowed our Beach Safety team to effectively monitor and prevent any violations of the CDC distancing guidelines. We also began limiting parking in county off-beach lots.

We closed county campsites and playgrounds. We've taken additional measures to protect our first responders. We also recognize this pandemic is impacting residents financially.

Volusia County's Community Assistance Division is offering two programs that can provide relief to families and individuals negatively impacted by the coronavirus. The division is able to provide up to \$2,000 in rent and utility assistance to qualified individuals and families.

And the state is allowing the county to use a portion of its State Housing Initiatives Partnership program funds to help applicants. People must meet income eligibility requirements. For more information, call 386-239-7757. This information will be posted online as well.

For those who depend on Votran for transportation, bus service will continue to run. Additionally, effective immediately, all fares have been waived. We've implemented strict cleaning procedures on both our buses and at transfer plazas. However, it's imperative to remember that if you're not feeling well, you should refrain from riding the bus. You should stay home.

We're also addressing concerns related to the traveling public. Last week, the Governor issued two executive orders requiring screening, isolation and quarantine of individuals whose point of departure originated outside the State of Florida in an area with substantial community spread. The Florida Department of Health, with assistance from the Florida Department of Transportation, was tasked with implementing the order and directing airports. FDOH implemented testing at larger airports, and the Daytona Beach International Airport was advised that they would be notified when screening would begin at their site.

However, county leadership decided to take a proactive approach, rather than wait for implementation by the state. The day after the governor's order was issued, staff collaborated with the Florida Department of Health and area medical professionals and began planning implementation of screening on a local level.

Proud to say by Sunday, the airport had implemented a screening process for all deplaning passengers. Currently, screening of passengers in all other Florida airports is only being applied to direct flights from areas with substantial community spread, as identified by the governor. Daytona Airport is the only airport in the state to implement screening of all flights, direct and non-direct.

We've reached out to other surrounding airports, such as Sanford-Orlando Airport, who have not yet had screening implemented by FDOH and FDOT, to inquire if and when they plan to initiate screening on their own. Many of our Volusia County residents use that airport as well.

On Tuesday afternoon, the governor issued executive order 2020-91 related to essential services and activities. The county immediately began reviewing the 34-page document to determine what changes needed to be implemented.

In short, the Safer at Home order emphasizes the same messaging we've been pushing all along. If you can stay at home, stay at home. And while you're home, it's okay to fire up your grill, but we don't want you starting campfires or burning old trash, because it's very dry out.

In fact, Volusia County Fire Rescue has issued an outdoor burn ban that takes effect at 12:01 a.m. This applies to the county's unincorporated areas, Oak Hill, Lake Helen and Pierson as well.

Under the burn ban, all outdoor burning, unless authorized by the Florida Forest Service, is prohibited.

Additionally, we continue to express, limit your travel and exposure to others. Essential services will remain open, which means that you can continue to buy groceries and necessary items.

Beginning tomorrow, Volusia County Government offices will be closed to the public, except by appointment.

We have put efforts in place to continue providing services remotely, when possible. Vital public services will continue without interruption. Including: Garbage and recycling for unincorporated Volusia County, all Public safety functions, The Branch Jail and Correctional Facility continues to operate with restricted visitation. Most county-operated parks, boat ramps and trails remains open as long as people abide by social distancing guidelines. The Tomoka Farms Road Landfill and the West Volusia Transfer Station are open for normal business, but are accepting credit card payments only at this time.

The Ocean Center has transformed its exhibit hall into a medical supply distribution site. These supplies are for specific agencies, not the general public, and there is a process in place for the requesting agencies to request these supplies.

Public participation at the upcoming County Council meeting, Tuesday, April 7th will be submitted virtually. Details will be available tomorrow under the "Government" tab of Volusia.org. As always, live video and audio are available for the meeting, but in-person attendance will not be permitted.

Now for the beaches. In order to avoid sending an inconsistent or confusing message to potential visitors and citizens, we are taking the step to close our beaches as an additional effort to fight the potential surge in cases that is coming our way. Effective at midnight tonight, in coordination with the governor's order, all Volusia County beaches will be closed. All county owned off-beach parking lots will be closed. All vehicular and pedestrian beach approaches will be closed. All county-owned walkovers will be closed. All county beachside coastal parks and off-beach parking areas will be closed.

We will fly the double red flag, indicating that the water is closed to the public. Lifeguard towers will not be staffed. The beach is closed. Beach Safety will be enforcing these rules. Our goal is to educate violators, and we have every expectation that they will comply.

We really need your help, however, if offenders fail to comply, or if we see repeat violators, they will be issued a second-degree misdemeanor, which comes with a \$500 fine.

As a country, and even world-wide, we're dealing with something we've never faced before. When you turn on the news, a lot of the information that just is not good. But it's important to remember, there is still good out there.

We're beginning to hear stories of our community coming together. Of neighbors checking in on each other. Our businesses stepping up. For all of those efforts, we thank you! Right now, it's hard not to focus on the negative. But it's those positive actions is what will get us through. And again, I think everybody for the cooperation. I have seen amazing cooperation between the county, the cities and other agencies and I am very proud of the efforts. Thank you.

Kevin Captain, Interim Community Information Director, County of Volusia

Thank you Mr. Recktenwald. At this time we would like to bring up Dr. Margaret Crossman the Chief Medical Officer for Halifax Health and Dr. Joe Smith the Chief Medical Officer for Advent Health in DeLand, Florida.

Dr. Margaret Crossman, Chief Medical Officer, Halifax Health

Thank you Kevin. We talked previously about social distancing and importance of that we hear that ever before. This is going to be key to follow the guide lines that we are being given.

Social distancing accomplishes several things. One is helping just to flatten the curve and a lot of people have been talking about flattening the curve. What we are really talking about is trying to delay and allow time for more preparation and we have had the luxury of that delay the spike/peak of the individuals that are sick, critically ill, and are requiring hospital services to make it through this illness.

The nice thing about flattening this curve, delaying it will hopefully will lessen its peak. The reason why this is important if you have heard anything about the case fatality rate, which is the number of individuals that will succumb to this illness, and become infected. It's not a fixed property. We can say a certain percent of individuals that get this may die from it. That percentage is very low. You need to keep that in mind we are not powerless with that. The case fatality rate in Wuhan in the beginning, they had little time to prepare or up their facilities was over 5%. We as other areas in China it was less than that. It was close to 1%. A lot of that had to do with the surge of care they had to provide in a short period of time.

So the World Health Organization has indicated that this could be anywhere from two to four percent on the case of fatality rate. In this county, when you look at our numbers, we are seeing

much lower than that. There are places that are being hit very hard and they are struggling with their resources and supplies to provide the excellent care they are custom to providing.

Here in Florida we have say over 7,000 cases right, and if we look at those numbers 80% that will be over 6,000 should have nothing over mild disease of that over 7,000 that I am talking about today. So over 6,000 should have mild disease. Over a thousand might require hospitalization and a smaller number as well under 500 would require intensive care level services.

You know at this time in the state of Florida on any day. I think you can say over 2,000 staffed intensive care unit beds. At Halifax I'm not sure how many we have at Advent, but we have 90 staffed ICU beds. So we are able to care for these patients right now. In fact the few that we have, have gotten excellent care. We have actually put all of them in our intensive care unit just for those extra measures and watching for any declines they may have.

So that case fatality rate, this is why I am driving this home; really can depend on how well we slow and make a less dramatic peak of this illness. Keep doing your part and I would just encourage you to keep self-isolating, quarantining if you have symptoms or if you think you have been exposed. Certainly the social distancing is really key here. It is safer at home.

Dr. Joe Smith the Chief Medical Officer for Advent Health in DeLand, FL.

Thank you Dr. Crossman. I am Dr. Joe Smith. I am the Chief Medical Officer for Advent Health DeLand.

In addition to the social distancing, the hand washing refrain from touching your face. I do want to emphasize that Advent Health and our health care providers are bring to bear a national scale response to this.

Advent Health while we have been in Central Florida for 110 years now, we are bringing expertise personnel not only from across the country but we are making purchases on a global scale. Thus to continue to make sure we have protective equipment, medication, and all of the supplies we needed to meet the demand for that small subset of this group of patients who become very sick.

We get a lot of questions about personal protective equipment and are the hospitals ready. I can tell you the hospitals are ready for this. As Dr. Crossman touched on this, we have had the luxury of seeing how this has happened and played out in not only China and Italy, but in New York. We have had the luxury to prepare for this. I can tell you that we are prepared and are creating additional capacity on top of the hundreds of ICU beds we have available in Central Florida that we have right now. Elective procedures have ramped down to make room for acutely ill patients and we appreciate the community patience and understanding. Certainly someone that has been planning a hip replacement or knee replacement for months, this is a major sacrifice for the community to make sure that hospitals can continue to have the ability to respond. We appreciate that.

There has been an enormous out pouring of support for physicians, our nurses, our care teams and that goes to those who are serving food, who are helping us clean. That has meant so much to us as a community professionals. I really can't tell you how much that means to our staff that have their own families at home that they are obviously concerned about.

Advent Health as established a website to look for ways that you can continue to contribute to that effort. You can find that at adventhealth.com/covid19relief. We would love to have you continue to support our care teams in that way.

I do want to emphasize again, our teams do have the support, the space and the material needed to provide safe care and not only to themselves but to our patients. At this time and in the foreseeable future. We do anticipate a rise as the curve continues to rise and we are prepared to do that.

Dr. Margaret Crossman, Chief Medical Officer, Halifax Health

The only thing I would like to share with you today, I have had lots of questions this week about what is the virus. I just want to take just a moment and talk about that and make sure we are all on the same page.

A virus is basically some genetic material that is encapsulated in a thin lipid layer or fat layer in this case. It could be RNA or DNA. In this case, it is an RNA virus and it is powerless until it gets inside a cell or in a living organism. That is basically what a virus is.

When this virus gets in a cell, it can begin to use its genetic material and replicate and multiply. As I have said previously, the interesting thing about this virus is its polymerase; that is the enzyme responsible for causing it to replicate once inside your respiratory cells or wherever it is. It is prone to error, so we get different strains of this virus and even now the virus strain that we are dealing with is very likely different from the original one in Wuhan. Our hope is that it is getting less virulent, less mean, as it goes through these little shifts and changes.

That is basically what a virus is, pretty powerless until it gets in a cell. The other thing it does not like is ultraviolet light. You may not be able to go to the beach, but you can go outside as you have heard and go for your walks or whatever you need. But ultraviolet light, heat when you wash your hands. Hot water is better; it will help to disrupt that fat layer. 65% alcohol containing products, sanitizers are just fine but you don't have to use just bleach and alcohol for everything. Regular soaps are just fine.

So keep that in mind, the key is to wash, wash, wash! Keep your hands off your face, especially when you are in areas where others have been. Keep your bathrooms and kitchens in your homes cleaned regularly. Just be safe and smart with this.

Dr. Joe Smith the Chief Medical Officer for Advent Health in DeLand, FL

Dr. Crossman and I are used to working with blood and viruses and bacteria and many of you may not be. So it is really important to know where your hands have been. Wash your hands often. Don't touch your face. In fact, asked earlier was "is this something that can crawl across the floor to me". The answer is No. This is transmitted by droplets. This is something you touch, a person, a surface. A vast majority of these cases that somebody has coughed on to or sneezed on to and then you touch your eyes, your nose or your mouth. This is how the vast majority of these cases have been transmitted.

Know where your hands have been. Don't touch your face.

Dr. Margaret Crossman, Chief Medical Officer, Halifax Health

We will close with that and take questions later.

Kevin Captain, Interim Community Information Director, County of Volusia

Thank you Dr. Crossman, Dr. Smith as they indicated we would take questions after our last speaker. Our last speaker is up. Ladies and gentlemen, Sheriff Mike Chitwood.

Sheriff Michael Chitwood, Volusia County Sheriff's Office

The only thing between me and the doctors answering your questions is me; so I will be brief.

I think the one thing you can take away in your elate person like myself if we had RNA and DNA. I think the thing you need to take away is we are more in the beginning of this fight than we are at the end. When you hear they have been talking about the peak it's important that we all follow the governors executive order, it's important that we follow CDC, Department of Health orders, it's important that we follow what the county is putting out. We are definitely going to see an increase; it is a matter of how big that increase is. Having said that I want to put this out there, in the words, into our community. In this past weekend; pop-up block parties, with a thousand people taking over a street. You are putting the lives of your friends and neighbors in danger; you are putting the lives of first responders in danger. So, if I see that behavior again this weekend, you can be rest assured, we will be acting on the governors order and enforcing that. Now is not the time to be holding a garage party with a keg and invite a hundred of your closest friends there. It's not going to work! So, follow the orders. We don't want to make arrests, we want to educate! There is a reason why we are doing this, the reason why we are doing this, is this is a highly contagious disease, we have learned from other countries we have great medical staff here, we have great first responders, we have great emergency management. We are all telling you this for a reason. Because we want to resume life as we knew it as soon as we can. Throwing pop-up block parties just isn't gonna do it. The other thing I want to address is there is a curfew issue. The City of Daytona Beach has issued a curfew. Great respect for the Mayor, he has a reason why he did this with his city. We are consulting with other police chiefs at this point

and time, and consulting with the county, we don't think a curfew is necessary at this time! But as what Mr. Recktenwald said, a lot of what the government does is in response to what the people are not doing. If you don't want to follow the orders then we are going to be left with no other choice than to issue a curfew, close the boat ramps, and make life a little bit tougher, we don't want to do that, we don't want to do that. So having said that...

Kevin Captain, Interim Community Information Director, County of Volusia

Thank you Sheriff. So for those of our listening audience, we are all in a large room called the Emergency Operations Center in Daytona Beach, many reporters are here and this is the time for questions. We are going to break the questions up into subject matter. First the County Government, then hospitals, then law enforcement. We have our production coordinator that will walk around the room with a microphone. You do not need to touch the microphone, just state your question. The first round of questions we will do is county government related. Our manager, Mr. Recktenwald will answer those, with that are there any questions regarding county government. Raise your hand, please.

Question #1: Speaker: did not announce name

Thank you. Mr. Recktenwald, we got word yesterday that Route 25 Votran, has been suspended for the time being. Are there any other Votran Routes under contemplation of being cancelled or suspended?

Response by George Recktenwald, County Manager, County of Volusia

No not at this time, that is the only one.

Question #2: Speaker: Casmira Harrison, News Journal

Have the beaches ever been closed like this ever before in the past or is this unprecedented?

Response by George Recktenwald, County Manager, County of Volusia

Except for very short periods during a hurricane. This is the only time to my knowledge in 22 years that we have had anything like this.

Question 3: Speaker: Casmira Harrison, News Journal

I've noticed that a couple of other people were wondering, surrounding counties have given, kind of, daily updates. I was wondering why Volusia County isn't doing that, and if there were any plans to do something like that in the future.

Response by George Recktenwald, County Manager, County of Volusia

You know, we looked at the updates based on what the activity that is happening; we don't want to wear people out for no reason. We put out updates all of the time on-line. We certainly, as the situation is fluid as things where there is information that needs to get out we will increase any kind of news conferencing, or any other way of putting out information, but I do know that every day we put out information through our Emergency Management site, and I know the Sheriff puts out information on his site, so there's a lot of information that goes out every day, multiple times per day.

Question #4: Speaker: Nicole Griffin, News 13

There's been a lot of activity on social media showing people disregarding Flagler County's closure of the beaches and still going out and taking pictures. What kind of enforcement is there going to be here to prevent that.

Response by George Recktenwald, County Manager, County of Volusia

Well, one of the things we have here in Volusia County is, we do have a very large beach patrol that is backed up by other agencies: the cities the Sheriff. We have 54 officers that are out on the beach that are triple certified law enforcement, EMT's and ocean rescue. So, they will be on patrol and be making sure that people are doing what they are supposed to be doing.

Question #5: Speaker: Amanda Castro, News 6

Does the county beach closure affect city closures as well or do cities make their own decisions regarding beaches in their jurisdiction.

Response by George Recktenwald, County Manager, County of Volusia

Well here in Volusia County, under our Charter we have a consolidated beach, so there is no such thing as a city beach here in Volusia County. So it's under the control of the County.

Question #6: Speaker: Amanda Castro, News 6

One more, regarding Daytona Beach issuing a curfew, and other municipalities and counties not doing that, is there a fear of causing any kind of confusion or just, as it appears that there is not a symbiotic agreement within county and municipalities when it comes to a curfew.

Response by George Recktenwald, County Manager, County of Volusia

Well, actually, the Sheriff and I talk multiple times a day and we've talked also with the city. One thing about Volusia County, we are a very large county and we have sixteen cities, and there are different conditions in each of those areas. So I think there's not a one size fits all answer. I think it is symbiotic, we work together and right now this is something as the Sheriff says, the city feels that they need. They have a large urban area, the county a little bit different, but as we

said we stand ready to do whatever at the time, and we work close with the Sheriff and it is a tool that we'll use if needed. What I've seen though is extraordinary good behavior on so many people and we want to continue and promote that. The more we can do then, the more that I think that, not only will we be flattening the curve, but we will be helping our community, for the other side of all this, because there is going to be another side. And, after this event we want to come out of this as a strong community.

Question #7: Speaker: did not announce name

What is your biggest challenge moving forward?

Response by George Recktenwald, County Manager, County of Volusia

I think the biggest challenge moving forward is that we flatten this curve, and by the way, I think that we are doing that, and you can see in the numbers that we have pushed this thing out farther. I see, really, that we have a lot of people that have gone out of work. This county has a lot of service industry that has really been affected by this. I think by getting these people back to work and making sure that they can keep their homes, and keep their livelihood, is our biggest challenge as we move forward.

Question #8: Speaker: Vernon Burton

With regards to the rent assistance; is that for public housing or will it also be for private property where a person is in jeopardy of being evicted?

Response by George Recktenwald, County Manager, County of Volusia

What I would answer is that people need to call the number that we have there on what the experts can say. But, for the most part I think its "housing," but I don't know if they differentiate between that. It may be, being that some of that housing may already be subsidized, but that's a question. Dial the number that we have there and our folks in Community Services can certainly answer that.

Question #9: Speaker: did not announce name

With the beaches being closed are you still encouraging people to get out walk and exercise, and walk on the beaches?

Response by George Recktenwald, County Manager, County of Volusia

Not at this time. I think it is important we send a message at this time that the beach is closed. We will continue to work towards these type of things. We have beautiful trails in this county. We have award winning with that. We have many, many streetscapes and areas that I think, where people can walk right now. And really what we are really trying to say to people; that we

have a lot of people traveling long distances to get to the beach, and that is really what we are trying to say to people. Don't come in here from other areas and think that you are going to be able to go out and lounge on the beach. It sends a bad message out to people at a time when we are trying to get people to stay home or stay in your neighborhood, and discover your neighborhood. Walk around, find the areas that are close to you, and try to enjoy that first. Thank you.

Kevin Captain, Interim Community Information Director, County of Volusia

Thank you Mr. Recktenwald. We will move on to the second set of questions for our healthcare experts, Dr. Smith and Dr. Crossman. We are going to model social distancing.

Question #10: Speaker: did not announce name

Will recovering victims, has it been determined that they have an immunity; can they be re-infected? In other words, if you go through it, live through it?

Response by Dr. Margaret Crossman, Chief Medical Officer, Halifax Health

We are still discovering a lot about this particular virus. We do know that people are recovering, in fact Halifax sent two home yesterday, so that is good news. We do know that there are some of the tests that we can test your immune, your immunity response to this virus. And in fact this is one of the tests that we have used in other viruses to make sure that someone is immune and doesn't have to be revaccinated for something.

What we don't know is how long their immunity will last, if it is from here forward, or will it be a transient thing, if you will be vulnerable again, say in fall if there is another surge. My sense tells me that there will be some immunity to this particular strain.

And, as said earlier, since this virus likes to replicate in a way, that it changes a little as it goes, kind of like the flu virus. That strain that represents, if it represents, may look a little bit different. Some immune systems will be able to handle it, remember it, and handle it, and some may not, but we have a lot yet to learn.

Response by Dr. Joe Smith the Chief Medical Officer for Advent Health in DeLand, FL

I'll say that most of the data that we have seen, and it's still very preliminary, shows that the majority of patients who get this and recover, do not get re-infected.

Okay, there is also technology in the works now, Advent Health is working with some national partners, where we may be able to make antiserum from the plasma from those who have survived, recovered and cleared this virus.

And so there is all sorts of new information coming out about this virus. Every single day we are learning more it. We've both been asked a million times why didn't we have tests for this. We

forget, this was called the “novel” Corona-19 virus, right? It’s a new virus and so really, everything, the pace at which we are learning is impressive, but there is still a lot to learn.

Question #11: Speaker: did not announce name

Doctors, most of the questions that we are getting is about the availability of beds for Corona virus patients. And, I know that you said that we have a number of ICU beds. People are asking specifically how many? Can we accommodate what is expected since we haven’t crested so to speak? And they also want to know about personal protection equipment. A lot of you know, from folks, have been complaining that staff at hospitals, particularly. I’m getting questions about admin, are not being issued adequate masks to work.

Response by Dr. Joe Smith the Chief Medical Officer for Advent Health in DeLand, FL

So, our staff in patient areas are all in masks, at least. If you are working with a patient who is COVID-19 positive or in a procedure that is what we have designated a high aerosolization risk procedure. These are a procedures where you are placing equipment into the lungs and you are at an increased risk of generating that fine particle of respiratory secretions that may contain the virus. Those healthcare workers are in even higher level protection than the N95 or N100 masks to make sure that they are safe.

Question #12: Interrupted by speaker

Is there more than doctor, or do they have to keep just that one mask, get refreshed, fresh masks?

Response by Dr. Joe Smith the Chief Medical Officer for Advent Health in DeLand, FL

So, some equipment is absolutely safe to reuse. And, some equipment that has become soiled or has become wet is discarded at that time. We are trying to become the best stewards as we can of our personal protection equipment, because we don’t yet know where the end of this is, okay.

So I liken it to, uh, you know, you have many disposable products in your home; you can certainly reuse a plastic cup though if you wash it out, and that might be a stethoscope. But at this time, we really have enough, you are issued your equipment as needed, but we are really looking at technology that could be used to make that equipment more reusable and sustainable.

Response by Dr. Margaret Crossman, Chief Medical Officer, Halifax Health

And, I will add, at Halifax we are in an effort of be good stewards of the resources that we do have in anticipating a peak and a surge later. For our N95 masks specifically, we are repurposing them. We are using a system called Bioquell, and with that Bioquell you can take these masks, and up to a certain number of times, they’ve been proven to be safe, still protective and sanitized from this little virus, that doesn’t hold up well under things.

Other facilities are using UV light and they are actually redoing these masks at the end of every day. And, again for a certain number of times that you can reuse them, so we are reusing what’s been shown that you can reuse, that would be safe, that would be protective for the staff and also

not carry germs back to patients, where it is appropriate. And, you had a second part to your question.

Question #13: Speaker: did not announce name

We are asking about hospital beds; the availability of hospital beds.

Response by Dr. Margaret Crossman, Chief Medical Officer, Halifax Health

Sure, so as Dr. Smith alluded to earlier, because of reduction of elective procedures, our hospital volumes are down. And that's a good thing, that's what we needed, because we needed to stage, prepare and preserve, preserve, preserve our protective equipment as well. And, so our hospital volumes are down 30 or 40% in Halifax. As far as our intensive care unit, I said we had about 90 beds, we can, we've actually added up to 25 more so we actually have more right now. And, that could even be increased if need be. We have about 30% of our ICU beds currently occupied.

Response by Dr. Joe Smith the Chief Medical Officer for Advent Health in DeLand, FL

We have excess capacity of ICU beds and are working on plans to double if not triple that capacity. Some of that is visible and that's where you can see that we've moved things out of the hospital, when possible, but certainly we anticipate that as long as well all do what we are supposed to do; washing our hands, social distancing we should be able to flatten that peak and then the hospitals will have that capacity to continue to respond as needed.

Question #14: Speaker: did not announce name

Hi, is there a, we talked to the mayor of Oviedo, and we know that is in Seminole County, but she is encouraging her residents to wear facemasks, even if they are homemade. Is there a call from you guys to encourage whether healthy not going grocery shopping to wear facemasks.

Response by Dr. Margaret Crossman, Chief Medical Officer, Halifax Health

Good question. It's all about the timing. And I think we're at a time now, as I said, we are seeing more community, some community spread, a little bit, and so it is not unreasonable.

You don't know if your snuffle, that you might think is allergies this time of year, could be something else. So, to protect the environment and the people around you, if you do go out, it's not a bad idea, and especially if you have any symptoms at all, even if you think it's allergies, to cover yourself. Uh, it will also prevent people from coughing or sneezing into the environment, right. Because if it is a large droplet infected virus problem on our surfaces, and so it will keep you from spewing forth this virus into the environment to sit on those surfaces. Some surfaces three hours, other surfaces three days or so, right.

So, it's good for that reason. It's also not unreasonable to have people have a mask on, in what most people are saying, it's really about keeping you from touching your face. If you do it right and don't play with your mask a lot, when you put it on, just wear it to wherever you are going

and, um, the key is just, it's going to keep you from touching your mouth and eyes with things you may be coming in contact with on surfaces. We have encouraged our staff to go ahead and wear masks while they are in the hospital, especially those who involved in engaging patients and patient care.

We do have homemade masks, beautiful, colorful ones, and we are so grateful to the community for those who have made those masks. And, many of you probably saw from the University of Florida, a pattern that came out where they are actually using the wrappings of trays from the OR. That wrapping is able to be turned into these masks and it is essentially the equivalent of N95, and being a research center they have been able to research this and test it to make sure it is doing what it claims to do. So we actually have, we call them our "COVID Sewing Armies" that are already getting this material and making more masks.

So, all that to say we are not using those as physicians going into these rooms at this time, but having watched what happened in Italy, in New York and other places, we are preparing our supplies. If we find ourselves running short and if we have huge needs and demands on our resources, we will have things to fall back on.

Question #15: Speaker: did not announce name

You touched on this, but can you clarify how long the virus lives on certain, I guess, things?

Response by Dr. Margaret Crossman, Chief Medical Officer, Halifax Health

Surfaces. Yes, it seems to live on plastic the longest. What I have found was up to three or so days, on plastic. Again, it doesn't do well unless it is inside a living organism's cells. So, as far as just surfaces, plastic about three days, porous materials about three hours, and everything else is kind of in between. Anything that's going to suck water out of it, like wood, it's not going to last as well.

But, I bring up plastics specifically for this: last week I was out for my walk, and saw people with their children in a playground, and thought, oh, my goodness, please don't let them touch the plastic of monkey bars and other things. So, just realize it's out there, our playgrounds, for instance, do not get cleaned with the kind of cleaning that we are talking about. So beware, be careful and when you are touching these surfaces please do not touch your face. Wash, wash, wash, sanitize; is important.

Question #16: Speaker: did not announce name

And, sorry, one final question, this is a conversation in my household. Is there a difference between soap and antibacterial soap, when it comes to killing this virus?

Response by Dr. Margaret Crossman, Chief Medical Officer, Halifax Health

Not for this virus. So this little layer, this little lipid fat layer around it, is pretty vulnerable to just the detergent action. The key is the soaping up, lathering up for at least 20 to 30 seconds, and if you have not watched one of the videos that are out there on hand washing, you'll never wash your hands the same. When it shows you the lathering, and the time and how far up the arm ideally you go. So 20 to 30 seconds, teach them a song that goes that long.

Question #17: Speaker: did not announce name

So, the question is what are the symptoms of the virus?

Response by Dr. Joe Smith the Chief Medical Officer for Advent Health in DeLand, FL
Symptoms, yes, the symptoms of this virus in the vast majority of cases mimic that of common colds, common influenza that we see every year. There are a number of studies that are starting to show that in some patients have some GI issues, and the real answer is that they are very nonspecific, and for the vast majority of patients, greater than 80%, that's where this just stops. Just sort of have a mild, viral illness like we've all had. And, in fact when we see patients coming to Advent Health, that's what we are diagnosing in the overwhelming majority of these cases, and as Dr. Crossman mentioned earlier, even in our COVID patients, the majority of them have been able to go home and self-isolate.

Symptoms certain to be concerned about and when you might want to call your primary care physician, or visit a Centric Care facility are when you are running a fever, if you develop a prolonged and persistent cough, just a general sense of malaise, or overwhelming fatigue, uh, but it is certainly reasonable to call your primary care physician with any symptoms of not feeling well.

I do want to stress that unless you are experiencing chest pain, or shortness of breath that is very severe, or if you feel you are in real danger, it is important to not overwhelm our emergency departments right now and to seek care at your Centric Care, at your primary care physician, and we have a hotline you can call through Advent Health that is 877-VIRUSHQ. They will be able to help you navigate the best places to seek care is, but just remember this can really look like just about anything right now.

And, for the vast majority of cases it is a mild self-limited illnesses. It is that small percentage of the population that we are all working hard to protect right now by staying home.

Question #18: Speaker: Al Everson, The Beacon

A quick question for the doctors, first of all, if you have this excess capacity, your hospital volume, patient volume is down, have you all offered or have been requested, to take some patients from the hot zones elsewhere, such as New York, where they are overloaded, apparently? Secondly, there was a report on TV last night that said some people may be naturally immune to this. If that is true, can you develop some sort of profile if you may be naturally immune to it?

Response by Dr. Joe Smith the Chief Medical Officer for Advent Health in DeLand, FL

Okay, so we have not been asked to take patients from New York at Advent Health, Deland. New York is certainly getting a lot of justified attention from around the world. With the help of the Navy, FEMA, Department of Homeland Security. I think that this is wear that attention belongs now and they are doing their best to take a care of that at home. I would certainly like to minimize transporting patients around the country with this for a number of reasons.

Um, you asked a question about some people may be naturally immune. Every disease tends to attack one demographic more severely or sparingly, and often times it's only after we've had months or even years of data that you can really start to pin down why that is. This virus does seem to selectively, uh, impact the older population, year greater than 70, uh, more severely than those younger than that.

Heart disease and respiratory disease, but really heart disease was a bit of a surprise to me. Seems to be an independent risk factor for having a more severe course of this illness and it does seem to impact men more so than women in terms of severe illness.

Having said that, all of us should treat each other and ourselves, conduct ourselves as though we can all get it.

Response by Dr. Margaret Crossman, Chief Medical Officer, Halifax Health

Yes, we have not had requests for transfer, and really the mantra when you are dealing with something like this, is deliver the care there. You really don't want to be moving these patients around; many of them would be not be stable for that. They would be being taken from their homes from far away. It's just not conducive to that.

And as far as natural immunity, I absolutely agree, you know, there are some people who are going to see this, their immune system is going to see, recognize and go in to do business with it, and others whose immune system will just flounder, and we really don't have all the answers for that, but there are other factors such as those comorbid conditions to consider.

Question #19: Speaker: Al Everson, The Beacon

Let me follow up on that, if someone has an actual immunity, could he or she be still be an actual carrier effective of that virus.

Response by Dr. Margaret Crossman, Chief Medical Officer, Halifax Health

If you have natural immunity then you would, your immune system would, have beat this down so big in your system that it would be very hard for this virus to continue to survive in a cell, but not impossible.

An example of that would be, let's say chicken pox, as a child. A lot of people, especially in certain age groups, had Chicken Pox as children. And so, that virus you got over Chicken Pox, all the dots went away, you were doing fine and then years later you had a case of pneumonia or some sort of stress, or perhaps you were older and you got a case of shingles. Well, that's that

little virus manifesting itself, in a little bit of different way, but manifesting, because it's been hiding back in your spine for all these years in some of these columns inside your spine.

So that's what it can do. We do not know if this virus is capable of doing that based on the fact that it's very much like the cold viruses to some extent, but also like the SARS and the MERS, we've talked about that, the Corona viruses in years past I would not anticipate that this is going to stay in your system and then resurface in another way, but we don't know yet. We don't have all those answers.

Response by Dr. Joe Smith the Chief Medical Officer for Advent Health in DeLand, FL

I'd just like to say that it's an honor to see the community's response to the work that the healthcare professionals are out there doing every day. Um, it's a real privilege to be able to participate in something this historic in such a positive way. I know I speak for all doctors, all nurses, all techs, that we are very grateful for your support and understanding. And, I appreciate the spirit of curiosity that you are approaching this, but if you want to learn more you can do more, that means an awful lot to us.

Kevin Captain, Interim Community Information Director, County of Volusia

Thank you Dr. Smith and Dr. Crossman. The last round of questioning then will be for law enforcement issues, Sheriff Chitwood.

Sheriff Michael Chitwood, Volusia County Sheriff's Office

One of the good things with modern technology, Meaghan, is that while I was sitting here I received a text message. Daytona Beach has repealed its curfew, because legal came to the conclusion that it was in conflict with the Governor's Executive Orders. So, that put the curfew to bed. Go ahead, Meaghan, it's all yours. (Amanda Castro) Amanda. (Sheriff Chitwood) I'm sorry, Amanda. (Speaker: Amanda Castro) It's all good.

Question #20: Speaker: Amanda Castro, News 6

Sheriff, when do we get to the point that we need to start enforcing this? I understand that education, I understand giving people the benefit of doubt, but at what point do we say, you know, this is it; you got to start taking this seriously, we need to start putting some teeth to this?

Response by Sheriff Michael Chitwood, Volusia County Sheriff's Office

I think what you are going to see now is a concerted effort from all law enforcement as we go forward.

The Governor's got the Executive Order. We've moved into safer, uh, safer at home. The beach has been closed. And people don't like that. People don't want to hear what we are trying to do.

But, I think with County government, and when you hear from the medical professionals, the bigger picture here is, that curve is coming.

So, we're going to start this weekend and we're going to educate you. We're going to tell you it's a misdemeanor of the second degree. A \$500 fine you can be imposed with. If you reoffend, we don't want put anybody in jail, we are trying to keep the jail as disease free as possible. And right now they are doing pretty good. But, we're going to be out and we're going to be, the education initiative is not to penalize people, this is for your own good.

Now if you want to be a knucklehead about it and you're going to invite 1,000 of your closest friends for a pop-up block party this weekend, these people are going to get arrested. And that is not the objective here.

We cannot stress enough; we're not sitting here making decisions in a vacuum. These decisions are being made with a lot of medical input. None of us up here, the Chairman, the County Manager; we're not doctors. These folks in the white coats, they are the ones who are advising, "Hey, this is what we are seeing. This is the direction that we need to go." And, if you're sitting home and it's sunny and 90 out, and I wanted to go to the beach; well, that trip might cost you or your daughter or your son's life. Why risk that. We are asking for 30 days to follow these guidelines to protect your fellow residents and the rest of your community.

And, do what we are asking you to do. That goes to if you are quarantined, that's something we will address another time. We expect people to act responsibly. So, I don't know if that answers your question. (Cell phone beeping in background.) I'm afraid to look what that is going off about.

Question #21: Speaker: did not state name

Is there anything that you are doing to protect your first responders; you mentioned the block parties; you are not only putting your friends and family in danger, but also the people who are coming to respond; anything that your office is doing to keep them safe?

Response by Sheriff Michael Chitwood, Volusia County Sheriff's Office

Good question. The first thing I would implore the public to do is: police, fire and EMS, if we go down, nobody is coming. If you need to call us, you should be upfront with the call taker that, "Hey, I'm letting you know that I'm not feeling good. I've got a fever. I think I have the flu." We need to know that.

I can't speak for Fire and EMS, I can only speak for us. Every one of our deputies has protective gear. They have masks, they have gloves, they have a PPE suit. We've had the community come forward and we've got six hundred bottles or more of hand sanitizer, that every deputy has. In this building that you are in now, the other side is dispatch, which is critical to us. Before anybody comes in to play, their temperature is taken. You cannot get in if your temperature is above 100.4. The city, County Manager, has installed an ultra violet lighting system, air circulator, air

handler, so that kills germs and viruses that are in the air. So, we're trying to do everything humanly possible.

So, if we can't get there, you are not going to get help, but we need help from the community as well. And, I think that we're in good shape right now, on the deputy side of the house. Um, but the community has been a great help with that. Masks coming in to us, hand sanitizer; we just need the people to help us out here in this. If you don't feel good, let us know; we're still coming, but let us have the proper equipment on.

And, I will to tell you one thing, these people here at the hospital have been fantastic. We did a check, with this person who was really sick and we had to forcibly enter the house this Friday. The person had all of the symptoms of COVID-19. We got them to the hospital, contacted these folks, contacted Department of Health, and quarantined everybody. Four hours, it was discovered that the guy had pneumonia, he did not have COVID-19, and everybody was allowed to return to duty.

I think that was a heck of a turnaround, and heck of support for our first responders to know that the hospital and Department of Health were working so closely to get us where we needed to be. So, alright.

Kevin Captain, Interim Community Information Director, County of Volusia

Thank you Sheriff Chitwood. So, to just remind everyone to find information you can go to [Volusia.org/Coronavirus](https://www.volusia.org/Coronavirus). The Department of Emergency Management has also opened up what we call the Citizens Information Center. If you have general, non-health related questions, feel free to call that number that is 866-345-0345. And, just to echo what Sheriff Chitwood, and Manager Recktenwald, said. It is that no decisions are made in a vacuum, and there is a tremendous amount of cooperation between government officials, the Sheriff's Office, our area hospitals our Emergency Management and the Department of Health. These are all unified decisions, but the unity includes the personal responsibility of the residents and visitors. With that, good night.